

Practice Matters

Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) in Learning to ‘Outwit Opponents’: The relationship between Principles of Play and Practical Skills.

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Introduction

A current criticism of games teaching is that Physical Education (PE) teachers overly focus on pupils acquiring and developing practical skills and fail to teach pupils to select and apply those skills in the game situation (Ofsted, 2004, 2001; QCA, 2005). The revised National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE), in stating that pupils should learn how to ‘outwit opponents’ in invasion games activities (QCA, 2007a, 2007b), emphasises not only the need for sound practical skills, but an understanding of when and why they should be used. For this to occur, teachers must encourage learning in both the psycho-motor and cognitive learning domains (Capel, 2000; Griffin *et al.*, 2001; Light and Fawns, 2001). It has been suggested that the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model developed by Bunker and Thorpe (1982) is an appropriate instructional model given it emphasises learning equally in both domains (Metzler, 2005; O’Leary, 2008).

The Structure of a TGfU lesson

In the previous edition of Physical Education Matters I provided an example of a basketball lesson that utilised the TGfU model. The structure of that TGfU lesson consisted of the following:

1. Warm up

Skills should be used to orientate the pupils to the principle of play that is to be learned during the lesson.

2. Modified game

This game should emphasise the principle of play to be learned. The emphasis on this principle should focus the pupils on what they should have to do in the game situation.

3. Skills teaching

The teacher should evaluate from the modified game above, what pupils are doing well (in relation to the principle) and what skill(s) (that relate to the principle) require additional work. The teacher can use skill progressions at this point to improve performance. Here the emphasis switches from what to do (the principle) to how to do it (the skill(s)).

4. Game Situations

Pupils are put back into the modified game that can be progressed dependent on pupil achievement. Here the emphasis is on the principle of play and the previously taught skill(s) required to perform that principle.

In order to use this instructional model PE teachers' must firstly, know the principles of play. These principles or basic tactics, which apply to all invasion games, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Principles of Play (in bold)

<p>Attacking (in possession of the ball)</p> <p>Scoring and Penetration Supporting (the player with the ball) Keeping possession Passing ahead</p> <p>When possession changes from one team to another</p> <p>Creating space Denying space</p> <p>Defending (not in possession of the ball)</p> <p>Applying pressure (by the nearest player to the ball) Supporting (when I am close to the ‘pressurising’ defender) Covering (when I am some distance from the ball)</p>
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(The Football Association, 2000)

Practical skills in this paper are defined as a pattern of movements which are technically sound (Knapp, 1977). Examples could be shooting, getting open, passing, preventing the shot, preventing the pass, containing the dribbler and defensive positioning amongst many others.

Although principles of play come first and skills come second in the above lesson structure, the skills are not secondary (Bradley, 2004; Turner *et al.*, 2001). The skills are the ‘tools’ to allow the pupils to carry out the principles of play. Therefore teachers must also understand which skills relate to which principle of play if pupils are to play the game with a clear purpose. Recent research indicates that student teachers found it very difficult to locate the relevant skills within the principle of the play being taught when using the TGfU model (O’Leary and Griggs, 2007). The relationship between the principles of play and the skills required to perform the principles when attacking in basketball are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – The relationship between principles of play and skills when attacking in basketball

<u>Attacking (in possession of the ball)</u>	
<u>Principles of play</u>	<u>Appropriate skills</u>
Scoring and penetration	Various dribble moves (speed, hesitation, cross-over, between legs, behind back, inside-out etc. Various passes (chest, bounce, overhead, overhead side, baseball, behind the back). Pivoting. Various 1 on 1 moves (straight drive, cross over, head fake, rocka-step). Various shots (set shot, lay-up, reverse lay-up, jump shot, hook shot, foul shot).
Supporting (the player with the ball)	Getting open/free (V-cut, L-cut, backdoor cut).
Keeping possession	Holding the ball. Receiving/catching the ball. Protecting the ball. Stopping. Pivoting. Various dribble moves (protection dribble, re-position dribble etc). Various passes (chest, bounce, overhead, overhead side, baseball, behind the back). Offensive rebounding.
Passing ahead	Various passes (chest, bounce, overhead, overhead side, baseball). Pivoting.

A number of salient points need to be made regarding the above table. The skills above do not represent the total number of skills for a given principle. Clearly there are many others. Moreover, these skills can be broken down into sub- skills. For example, the lay-up shot could be broken down into the one-foot shot, the no-step lay-up, the one dribble lay-up, the lay-up off a pass, and the reverse lay-up shot. Teachers must also understand that each of these skills can be taught under various levels of pressure. It is also evident that some of the skills listed above appear in more than one principle of play category. This means what is emphasised within the skill depends on the principle of play being taught and learned. For example, when pivoting is taught

to reinforce the principle of possession, the emphasis lies in using the pivot to protect the ball from a defender. However, when the same skill is taught to aid the principle of passing ahead, the emphasis lies in ensuring the feet are turned towards the opposition basket to allow the pass forwards. Teachers must know what aspect of the skill to emphasise and not merely 'trot out' their regular pivoting practices and known teaching points. However, knowing what skills relate to what principle of play, how that skill might be taught and where the emphasis lies within the skill will not necessarily result in sound performance of the principle being taught.

PE teachers must be able to recognise which skill(s) need attention should the pupils not be able to perform the principle of play effectively. This is extremely difficult for the inexperienced or novice teacher (O'Leary and Griggs, 2007). Very good knowledge of the activity is required and this is likely to require additional training together with greater experience of teaching and/or coaching the activity.

Summary

The benefits of TGfU in engaging pupils in psycho motor and cognitive learning in order to outwit opponents has been largely accepted (see Green, 1998; Light, 2002; MacDonald, Kirk and Braiuka, 1999; Metzler, 2006). The difficulties of adopting such an instructional model have also been extensively documented (see Behets and Vergauwen, 2006; Capel, 2007; Curtner-Smith, 1999; Green 1998; Light and Butler, 2005; Stroot and Ko, 2006 amongst others). Nonetheless, for PE teachers wishing to consider implementing TGfU, an early task is to identify the principles of play and the skills that allow pupils to perform such principles. Having read this paper it is hoped that practitioners may wish to consider those practical skills that contribute to the relevant principles of play when possession changes from one team to another and

when a team is defending in basketball. This process of mapping skills to various principles of play can then be completed for other invasion games. In doing such tasks teachers who utilise, or are thinking of utilising the TGfU model, should help their pupils to perform skills well and be able to use those skills at the right time in order to execute the principles of play competently. As result of such learning, pupils should be able to 'outwit opponents' more successfully.

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